

7.

THE REMARKS,
MADE BY LORD MORPETH,
ON THE AUTHORS OF
“THE TRACTS FOR THE TIMES,”
AND
THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,
CONSIDERED
IN A LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF “THE TIMES”
NEWSPAPER.

BY THE
REV. WILLIAM BRUDENELL BARTER,
RECTOR OF BURGHCLERE AND HIGHCLERE,
AND LATE FELLOW OF ORIEL COLLEGE, OXFORD.

“For as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.”
ACTS xxviii. 22.

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“No man, however widely differing from them, can open any of their publications, without perceiving that they write with learning, ability, calmness, seriousness, command of temper, a strong sense of responsibility, forbearance, and courtesy of language towards their adversaries. No man can know anything of their lives without being aware that they act consistently with their profession ; that they are more than usually strict, circumspect, self-denying, and (as far as man can judge by outward demeanour) pious. The most respectable of their opponents in controversy have borne free and generous testimony to their merits in these respects. Such antagonists never, even for a moment, expressed or felt the smallest doubt, that the men with whom they had to deal were sincerely attached to the Church of England, firmly persuaded that their doctrine was identical with hers, and utterly incapable of deliberately violating their oaths. No calumny, we are satisfied, was ever more unmerited than this, which casts upon men, who are peculiarly zealous for ecclesiastical authority, (and who are maligned for being so,) the imputation of disregarding it in practice. They were not ‘Puseyites’ who contended for the abolition of the Thirty-nine Articles in our universities. They were not ‘Puseyites’ who, in 1833, made the press teem with pamphlets in favour of changes in the Prayer Book. They are not ‘Puseyites’ who, having sworn to obey the Rubric, depart from it as often as they think proper in the celebration of Divine Service. They are not ‘Puseyites’ who alter or leave out such expressions as do not suit their notions in the offices of Burial and Baptism. But men who do these things, together with the organs of that political party which has abetted all the attacks of dissent upon the Church of England, accuse men, who do them not, of unfaithfulness to the Church : and politicians, whose whole life has been devoted to the advancement of Popery in this kingdom, cry out ‘No Popery !’ with the loudest, if an Oxford clergyman dares to suggest that the Church of Rome, though corrupt, may possibly not be Antichrist, or ventures to breathe a prayer for the restoration of Christian unity throughout the world.”

A

LETTER,

&c.

BELIEVING that the Authors of the Tracts for the Times are the authors also of an increasing reverence among us for our Church as a divine institution, and believing that in times of danger they have made known to us the real strength of her position, and the only legitimate means by which she may be defended, I am not surprised that unlearned and unstable men should have attacked them in the worst spirit of religious controversy. Such opponents, however, might safely be disregarded, and permitted, without a comment, to persevere in their violent and contradictory accusations. But it seems to me, that any among us who feel gratitude to these men for their exertions in our sacred cause, do well to state their reasons for this feeling with firmness and moderation, when the same charges are advanced by men of piety and acknowledged talent.

I have read with much pleasure, remarks made in the Times on Lord Morpeth's speech. What is there said, on the hostility manifested by some members of our Church, to the Book of Common Prayer, touches a chord, to which my feelings so completely respond, that I cannot but hope you will not decline giving to the few remarks which I shall make the benefit of your extensive circulation.

With regard to the attack which his Lordship has thought fit to make on the University of Oxford; if he considers the matter impartially, he must be convinced that the University of Oxford is not more answerable for the publication of the Tracts for the Times, than for the publication of the able speeches which he delivers in the House of Commons. It would be hard measure to call that venerable seat of learning to account for every production of those who have had the benefit of its instructions. As to the tendency of the doctrines advanced in the Tracts for the Times to Popery, his Lordship would see immediately, if he gave any attention to the matter, that men who professed precisely the same principles in their day, are among the most able defenders of our Church, against the errors and encroachments of that corrupt system of Christianity; and that the names of many such may

be found in the list of those who, in the time of James the Second, perilled their liberties and lives, by putting themselves in the first rank of its opponents. But I am not surprised that Lord Morpeth has fallen into this mistake. The same error has been committed by many men of high talent and station in our Church, who have also gone farther, and have ventured to enter into controversy with these men, without fully comprehending the nature of the principles which they have attempted to beat down.

The most popular charges which are brought against the writers of the Tracts for the Times, are these, a desire to set up a new system of doctrine in our Church, and to put aside the principles of the Protestant Reformation. I will say as few words as possible on each of these subjects.

The first of these charges is, an attempt to set up a new system of Christian doctrine in this country; as if the men who write in these publications were now for the first time disclosing a system hitherto wholly unheard of, and, in fact, the offspring of their own imaginations. Now the truth is, they have never endeavoured to recommend a single opinion or doctrine of their own; they have attempted to turn the attention of their brethren solely to the pure creed of the primitive Church of Christ.

To their innocence in this respect, their enemies themselves bear witness. The most able of whom¹ has allowed, (as every one must who does not shut his eyes to the truth,) that the doctrines they advocate are the doctrines of primitive Christianity. So much for the novelty of their creed. Then, as to their setting aside the principles of the Protestant Reformation, or disarming them, as it has been said, of their poignancy and efficacy, on account of which, every sincere friend of that Reformation has been called upon openly to declare his dissent from these doctrines, the following I consider a satisfactory answer:—

The “principles of the Protestant Reformation,” is a wide term, almost as wide as that of the “Protestant Religion;” it may mean anything or nothing; *but the true, the avowed principle of the Protestant Reformation in the English Church, was nothing else but to restore the doctrine of the primitive Church of Christ, purified from Romish corruptions.* This was the only principle of reformation professed by Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley, and this principle is the all-pervading one of the Tracts for the Times; so that were the real friends of the Protestant Reformation to declare their dissent from these doctrines, they would

¹ The Author of the History of Enthusiasm.

make a desperate and very unwise attack upon themselves, and their own tenets.

But, it may be asked, if the writers of the Tracts for the Times are pure in doctrine, and blameless and harmless, why is so loud a voice raised against them? Why are grave men in authority, periodicals of conflicting religious opinions, newspapers without number, unwearied in their attacks; some with more polished weapons, others with coarser arms, "*stipitibus sudibusque præustis*," of vulgar and coarse abuse²? A plain answer is this, because these men have put themselves forward as defenders of the fortress of the Church of England — the Book of Common Prayer, and the principle on which it was compiled, namely, that of deference to primitive tradition. It is for this book, and not for these men, that I fear; let

² "There is not a particle of true intellectual vigor or manhood or candour in his whole sect." It is the Standard that condescends to write thus. The editors of the "Record," the "Christian Observer," the "Congregational Magazine," and other avowedly religious publications of that class, too numerous to recount, have continually filled their columns with railings of a still lower kind, have, as it were, come together for this end, and have ceased not. Thus, while they have gained the applause of violent partisans, they have diminished considerably their influence with the religious portion of their readers, by proving that whoever may be in the wrong, they cannot be altogether in the right.

them be trampled under foot, let them be accused of favouring errors which their soul abhors. Was not their Master crucified for aiming at the government of a petty province, when He refused all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them? To suffer under false accusations is a severe trial, but they may support it with Christian patience, and great will be their reward in heaven: but this I know, that if they are beaten down, their adversaries will have gained no victory while the Book of Common Prayer remains unmutilated. In that book, the principles of the primitive Church must circulate widely through the land; the congregations of the Church of England must still address their God in the words, and in the spirit, of the primitive Church of Christ. In those prayers,—in the forms of Baptism, of Burial, and the rite of Confirmation, of Ordaining Deacons and Priests,—they must find the main doctrines of the Tracts for the Times set forth in as plain terms as the wisdom of man could devise; and in the Catechism, in which, (if they act honestly,) they are bound to instruct their children, they will find not a word to favour the modern gloss on the doctrine of Justification by Faith, but the whole in perfect harmony with that doctrine as held by the primitive Church of Christ. Would that all who love this sacred

deposit read the history of former times, and judged by the perils it has escaped of its present danger. When Laud was beheaded, there would have been no triumph to the Independent principle, had not, on the same day, the use of the Book of Common Prayer ceased throughout the land. Then, indeed, it gained a short-lived victory.

Let us consider for a moment the state of the Church of England, when these Tracts were first published. Independent principles had for a long time silently gained ground within its pale. The Liturgy, and especially the Church Services, were in many instances mutilated, according to the caprice of those who, though independents in principle, had become inconsistent ministers of the Church of England. The Catechism was frequently discarded from schools, superintended by the Clergy of our Church, as unfit for the instruction of children in the doctrines of Christianity. Curtailments in the Morning and Evening Services of our Church, and alterations in our Creeds, were spoken of with as much freedom, as men would discuss alterations in the shape of a garment, in order to meet the varying fashion of the present hour. Publications, in which the tenets of Calvin and John Knox could only be sincerely maintained, (for the authors

professed their creed, and were not of our communion,) had crept into the families of many pious Churchmen, and if they had done nothing worse, had lessened their reverence for the real and characteristic doctrines of the Church of England. A powerful union was effected between men of different creeds for the purpose of religious instruction, who could not agree in interpreting the last words of the Redeemer's last command, therefore *tracts were circulated by thousands to propagate a modern system of Christianity, from which all mention of the Sacrament of Baptism was excluded, as a subject not of sufficient importance to demand attention.* And although such things were done avowedly under the sanction, and by the aid of ministers of our Church, no authoritative voice was lifted up to check the evil.

In the mean time, popery was numbering her converts by thousands in our land, and notwithstanding the examples of America and Scotland, in which the increase was proportionably greater, it was attributed to the want of lively reformation principles, with the same truth as some mediciners of the present day attribute the bad health of their patients to not imbibing a sufficient quantity of their noxious specifics. Nor was this all the danger; the Clergy of the Church of England were unarmed, the dissenters claimed the victory

when opposed on principles falsely termed Evangelical, and claimed it with justice, and the right cause was on the point of being overborne by the number and violence of its assailants. The Book of Common Prayer stood alone in the midst of the troubled waters. It stood a beautiful fortress of the olden time ; but as it was constructed as if in perfect contempt of the rules of modern art, its mutilation or destruction was contemplated as an easy task, to be completed at leisure, whenever its enemies might agree on the style of building they would wish to raise in its stead. It was at this juncture that God raised up pious and learned men in its defence, and the firmness of the rock on which they built their outwork may be known by the foam of the waters which have dashed against it, and the violence of their recoil. So far then from exhorting my younger brethren of the Clergy not to meet these men fairly in argument (advice which has emanated indeed from a very high and liberal quarter), so far from advising them a dogged adherence to their own opinions, I would call on them to inquire diligently whether these men are employed in vindicating the doctrines of Scripture and of primitive Christianity ; and if they find it to be so, to defend, not these men, who are subject to error, but the faith they profess, which was delivered to the Saints, and is

treasured in the Holy Catholic Church. Above all, I would exhort them not to meddle with them who are given to change.

If one of Raphael's tablets were in your possession (I would ask them), how would you act? would you venture to re-touch, or to re-paint it? would it not rather be your care, if it were possible, to cleanse it from all stains, to bring out the beauties that had been obscured by the effect of time, and to restore every tint of the glorious original.

And will you treat the sacred deposit of catholic Truth, committed to your charge, with less reverence? God forbid. Oh guard it from those who would not hesitate to daub the sacred relic with the coarse colouring of modern art; suffer not Geneva cloaks to be substituted for its graceful and flowing draperies. Take your side with the martyr Church, and if the memory of her earliest Saints who cannot be disturbed in their place of rest, be assailed with the grossest ribaldry, is it not plain that the same spirit is at work, which opposed that holy army 1700 years ago? and that it should be met, on our part as it was on theirs, with an entire devotion to the cause of primitive Christianity?

W. BRUDENELL BARTER.

POSTSCRIPT.

I write against the spirit in which the "Tracts for the Times" are opposed: I do not agree with all the opinions advanced in those writings, especially on the subjects of sin after baptism, and reserve in communicating religious knowledge. Divines, however, who prefer the authority of the pious and eloquent Mr. Cecil, to that of the Fathers of our Church, the friends and companions of the Apostles, should recollect that he acted precisely on this principle of reserve when he first entered on his ministry in St. John's Chapel. Dr. Platt, his biographer, when he mentions this fact, says, that "the religious part of his auditory, not comprehending his aim, were ready to pronounce on his plan, as shunning to declare the whole counsel of God. Yet he was wisely following the example of his Master, in delivering the truth, as they who heard were able to bear it: and thus forming a lodgment in their minds, and preparing them for the full display of all the doctrines of the Gospel." Those, therefore, who profess to hold Mr. Cecil in high esteem, might, on this point, consistently abstain from any very violent denunciation of the "Tracts for the Times."

NOTES.

NOTE I.

ON JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

IT is not my intention to enter on a discussion of the doctrine of Justification by Faith further than is necessary to explain what I mean by the modern gloss on that doctrine. The Epistle of St. James was a stumbling block to Luther, and has continued to be so to Divines of a certain class in our day, for this reason, that they have taken a false view of the subject, and are now constantly endeavouring to bend the text of Scripture to their creed. The method most approved at present for this purpose, is, to declare that there are two kinds of Justification, one in the sight of men, and the other in the sight of God ; and that St. James, when he says, we are justified by works, means, that we are justified in the sight of men only. This is the false gloss on the doctrine to which I allude, and to this misinterpretation of Scripture, I am sorry to say that Mr. Faber has lately given the sanction of his venerable name. Now, St. James throughout his Epistle alludes solely to justification in the sight of God. He argues against faith as a feeling, or a profession, or anything but a principle of action, and declares it to be dead without works ; that is

having no justifying efficacy at all. "What does it profit, my brethren, if a man say, I have faith and have not works; can faith *save* him?"

Salvation and Justification in the sight of men have no connection whatever with each other. The truth is, (if factious disputants could but see it,) that neither faith nor works justify, save as they unite us to Christ; it is He that justifieth, and through Him alone that we obtain pardon and acceptance. The man who considers himself justified by his faith, save as it contributes to this union, is as self-righteous as he who considers himself justified by his works; and that he speaks scripturally, who says he is justified by faithful obedience, so far as it strengthens and cements this union, is plain from the teaching of all the inspired writers, as well as from that of Christ Himself. He traces every benefit conferred on us by God to this union, tells us that without Him we can do nothing, that if we abide in Him everything will be given us, and that if we keep His commandments we shall abide in Him. To hold therefore that justification by works signifies only justification in the sight of men, is equally antinomian and unscriptural.

I cannot end these observations without expressing my conviction that most of the volumes written on this point maintain a dispute on words only; that there is no vital difference between sincere Christians in the matter; and that if we could be persuaded to look on faith and works as means to an end only, and that end an union with, and an abiding in Christ, (which is surely the scriptural view of the subject,) the controversy, if not altogether extinguished, would at least be deprived of all its bitterness.

NOTE II.

ON THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

A DIVINE, for whom I have the greatest personal regard, for whose character and learning I cannot too highly express my respect, and the only man who appears to have entered on this controversy with the two indispensable requisites, a competent knowledge of the subject, and a Christian temper, has lately accused Polycarp and St. Ignatius of departing from the spirit of the Scriptures, and unduly exalting the Christian Ministry.

Were these holy men on the earth, they would be able to give a very simple and satisfactory answer to these charges, namely, we were instructed by St. John in these matters. But it may be said that by rating the authority of these Fathers so highly, we in fact invent another Gospel for ourselves. Far from it,—We only exercise the duty of private judgment by humbly deferring to the best commentators on the original document.

We take up the Gospel certainly without a desire or a hope of obtaining a clearer view of the truth, than that which was communicated by the inspired writers themselves to their friends and fellow labourers ; and we find texts which exalt the authority of the Christian ministry as highly as any expression used by St. Ignatius. We may, it is true, adopt various explanations of these texts, and all well suited to the liberal spirit of the present hour. We may take the pious non-conformist Baxter as our guide,—we may adopt the opinions of Mr. Taylor, and the dissenters in England, who would persuade us that the knowledge of Christianity is still in its infancy, or

listen to the same voice, echoed by Dr. Channing and the Unitarians, from the opposite shores of the Atlantic.

But we prefer to all these, and a thousand other conflicting authorities, the doctrine of Him who was a friend of St. John, and heard from his mouth the words of truth. We listen to his teachings with the most earnest attention when he instructs the Churches he planted, and *on the road to martyrdom* leaves them the precious legacy of truth, which he had received from the Apostles, with a charge to preserve and to transmit it. To such authority we humbly and thankfully defer; believing, that by so doing we are following the legitimate teaching of Christian humility, as well as the plain dictates of common sense, and furthering, to the best of our power, the fulfilment of our Saviour's earnest prayer for the unity of His Church. If we would see how surely the adoption of a contrary course leads to extreme error, we have only to consider the notions of another class of men, of whom Dr. Arnold is, perhaps, the most able representative. I mean those who deny altogether the existence of a priesthood in our Church; because, when arraigned at the bar of their philosophy, it is at once pronounced to be an institution unworthy of enlightened approbation, and evidently founded on false and evil principles. This is strongly maintained by Dr. Arnold, in the Appendix to his Sermons, published some time ago, and is there argued in the true spirit of modern rationalism. As however no sophistry can deny the direct appointment of God in the case of the Jewish priesthood, his treatment of this part of the subject is unworthy of observation. It supplies a curious instance of the reasoning principle, exercised with no little arrogance upon matters somewhat too high for

its jurisdiction, but compelled, in the presence of the Divine authority, to patronize that which it would be manifestly impious to condemn. The Jewish priesthood is therefore excused, not merely being "as typical of the real and perfect Priest that was to come," but as being ordained as an accommodation to the notions and feelings of the age. It is acknowledged to be hereditary; but at the same time an offering is made at the shrine of offended liberalism in the shape of a positive, but surely unwarrantable, assertion, that it was invested with this character in order to meet "the universal feeling of the East." Thus the inscrutable purposes of the Most High God are made to unveil themselves before the pride of His creatures' intellect, and the works of His own immediate hand are dressed in a garb of human motives, lest when tried in the courts of human reason they should not be acquitted of absurdity. Indeed the whole Appendix is a remarkable specimen of that rationalising spirit, which, enthroning self upon the seat of judgment, complacently accepts or irreverently rejects the various parts of God's system, as they happen to be completely intelligible or not to the carnal wisdom which presumes to weigh them in its puny balance. When, however, we speak thus of the ability of Dr. Arnold to execute the task he has undertaken, let us in justice allow that he was engaged in opposing legitimate tradition, a Catholic doctrine in the true sense of the words, which has been held *semper, ubique et ab omnibus*, namely, the apostolical succession of the ministry in the Christian Church.

The usual method of assailing tradition is very different from this; its adversaries are for the most part accustomed to point out the errors of individuals, and then to

exult in a supposed victory over the Church Catholic ; whereas their triumph has been in reality over their own principle of private interpretation ; for whenever the language of the Fathers appears inconsistent with Scripture, it is always equally so with the teaching of primitive tradition, and is to be attributed wholly to the undue exercise of private judgment in matters of faith. And so it has happened, that if the greater part of the numerous writers, who have opposed the Tracts for the Times, instead of choosing some term expressive of their hostility to tradition, had inscribed the words “not private judgment” on their title-pages, the phrase would have been more german to the matter.

THE END.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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